

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 DHA-02 CIAE-00 DODE-00 NSAE-00 NSCE-00

SSO-00 USIE-00 INRE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSC-05

PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 BIB-01 /055 W

-----041201Z 020798 /15

O 041120Z MAR 77

FM AMEMBASSY PRAGUE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2193

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E.O. 11652: NA

TAGS: SOPN PROP PINS CZ

SUBJECT: "TEAR-GASSING" OF WESTERN JOURNALISTS

1. DEPARTMENT IS AWARE FROM WIRE SERVICES OF ALLEGED TEARGASSING OF TWO WESTERN JOURNALISTS IN PRAGUE. THEY ARE PIERRE REQUETTE OF REUTERS AND PHILLIPE DE BEUSCHERE OF AFP, BOTH STATIONED HERE. AS THEY HAVE TOLD THE STORY TO US, THEY WENT EVENING OF MARCH 3 TO HOME OF CHARTER 77 SPOKESMEN JIRI HAJEK TO TRY TO DETERMINE WHEREABOUTS OF ANOTHER CHARTER SPOKESMAN, JAN PATOCKA, WHO WAS SEEN BEING TAKEN AWAY FROM HIS HOME IN A POLICE VEHICLE. ARRIVING AT HAJEK'S HOUSE THEY FOUND THREE UNIFORMED POLICEMEN BLOCKING THE ENTRANCE GATE. THEY TRIED TO GET AROUND THE POLICEMEN, WHO THEN GRABBED ONE OF THEM AND TRIED TO FORCE HIM INTO A POLICE CAR. IN ENSUING STRUGGLE ONE OF THE POLICEMEN PULLED OUT A SMALL CANISTER AND SPRAYED IT IN THE FACES OF THE TWO CORRESPONDENTS. THE SPRAY CAUSED THEM TO BREAK INTO TEARS. AFTER AN EXCHANGE OF WORDS, THEY WERE ALLOWED TO LEAVE. NOTABLY, REQUETTE HAD SUFFICIENTLY RECOVERED FROM GASSING TWO HOURS AFTER INCIDENT TO ATTEND SOCIAL EVENT AT CANADIAN EMBASSY AND DE BEUSCHERE REPORTED NO LASTING ILL EFFECTS IN CONVERSATION ON MORNING AFTER INCIDENT.

2. COMMENT: EMBOFF WITH EXPERIENCE WITH US TEAR GASES, SUCH AS

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CS, POINTS OUT THAT IF POLICE HAD USED A SIMILAR AGENT THE CORRESPONDENTS WOULD NOT HAVE RECOVERED AS QUICKLY AS THEY DID. WE NOTE ALSO THAT THE CORRESPONDENTS APPARENTLY TRIED TO GET PAST UNIFORMED OFFICERS ASSIGNED TO KEEP VISITORS AWAY FROM HAJEK AND ACTING WITH LEGAL AUTHORITY. WHILE STATIONING OF POLICE IN FRONT OF DISSIDENT'S HOUSE AND TRYING TO KEEP JOURNALISTS AWAY FITS IN WITH PATTERN OF HARASSMENT USED BY THIS REGIME,

WE ADVISE DEPARTMENT TO BE CAUTIOUS IN COMMENTING ON INCIDENT, SINCE
THIS MAY BE ONE CASE IN WHICH GOC WAS NOT DELIBERATELY
HARASSING JOURNALISTS IN TREATING THEM AS IT DID. IF CASE
BECOMES PRESS CAUSE CELEBRE, IT WILL ONLY FURTHER WORSEN
CONDITIONS FOR JOURNALISTS HERE AS GOC REACTS DEFENSIVELY.
BYRNE

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NNN

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptoning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
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Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 04-Mar-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
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Format: TEL
From: PRAGUE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
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ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19770392/aaaadddz.tel
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Litigation History:
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TAGS: SOPN, PROP, PINS, CZ
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